

When To Refer To Occupational Therapy

A Quick Clinical Reference for Pediatricians & Office Teams

Fine Motor & Hand Skills

- Difficulty with crayons, pencils, scissors, or utensils
- Difficulty drawing, coloring, pre-writing, or handwriting
- Unable to complete buttons, zippers, small objects, or has decreased hand strength

Sensory Processing & Regulation

- Overwhelmed by sounds, touch, movement, or busy environments
 - Strong reactions, sensory seeking, or sensory avoiding
- Difficulty recovering after sensory input

Feeding & Mealtimes

- Extremely limited food variety or strong food aversions
- Difficulty tolerating textures, smells, or appearances
- Difficulty using utensils or participating in mealtime routines

Self Care & Independence

- Poor dressing, undressing, toileting, or hygiene routines
- Difficulty using utensils, cups, or everyday items
- Needing significantly more assistance than expected for age

Motor Skills & Coordination

- Balance, coordination, body awareness, or motor planning difficulties
- Difficulty learning new motor skills
- Avoids playground or physical activities

School & Classroom Participation

- Pre-writing or handwriting difficulties
- Trouble with classroom materials or fine-motor tasks
- Difficulty participating in age-appropriate classroom activities

If you are unsure, an OT evaluation can help determine whether additional support is appropriate.